



*Department of State
Press Office 202-647-2492*

State Department Working to Better Protect People and Facilities

In the weeks following the attacks on the U.S. Special Mission Compound and nearby Annex in Benghazi, Libya, Secretary Hillary Clinton convened an independent Accountability Review Board (ARB) to examine the facts and circumstances surrounding the attacks, and report on the findings and recommendations of its review. Ambassador Tom Pickering and Admiral Michael Mullen were selected to co-chair the ARB. The Department accepted all 29 recommendations of the ARB.

Under the tenure of Secretary John Kerry, the Department has closed out 22 of the 29 recommendations, meaning these recommendations have been fully resolved or that there are concrete, long-term programs in place today to fully implement them. The remaining 7 recommendations are in progress or nearing completion.

The State Department has instituted procedures to assess and manage risks, ensuring that our high risk posts receive the attention and resources that they need:

- The State Department has implemented a repeatable process to make decisions regarding the U.S. presence in high-threat locations. The Vital Presence Validation Process (VP2) facilitates clear-eyed assessments of whether the U.S. should operate in dangerous locations, and if so, how.
- The Department has established “support cells” to implement clearly-defined procedures before opening or re-opening critical threat or high-risk posts.
- The processes established by the VP2 and used by the “support cells” were applied with great success in the recent return to Bangui, in the Central African Republic. After suspending operations in December 2012, the Department employed the VP2 process and a support cell to determine that we should and could go back. Working with colleagues at the Department of Defense to assess the security situation on the ground, the Department developed and executed a comprehensive plan for a return.
- The Department established a standing “tripwires” committee to review incidents that may indicate the need to change a post’s security situation and to determine what immediate actions should be taken.

The Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security has updated its training programs to better reflect the current security environment of posts overseas:

- The Department established a panel of supervisory special agents to review the High Threat Tactical Course. Following that review, the Department increased and expanded the training that DS Special Agents receive for high threats to include 170 operational requirements and doubled the length of the course from 5 to 10 weeks.



- The Department is expanding the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) course for Foreign Service Officers stationed at all high-threat posts to better prepare them for dangerous environments. And we are working towards making FACT training universal for all Foreign Service personnel and employees at posts overseas.
- To better combat fire as a weapon, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security partnered with the City of New York Fire Department and the Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group to enhance the training curriculum and implement countermeasures in response to fire and smoke used as a terrorist weapon.

The Department has reviewed the number of security personnel required to appropriately protect our people and facilities at 275 unique locations and increased those levels to meet the current needs:

- The ARB recommended that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security expand the number of Diplomatic Security personnel, and the Department is working to achieve its targets. The Department created 151 new Diplomatic Security positions. 122 employees, including 75 new DS agents, have been hired. The Department plans to hire the remaining 29 employees this year.
- Working with the Department of Defense, the State Department has deployed 17 new Marine Security Guard detachments since the Benghazi attacks. An additional 18 detachments will be deployed in the coming years with the continued cooperation of the Department of Defense.



The Department is working to ensure that personnel at high threat facilities have access to appropriate security and safety equipment.

- The Department has ensured that all high-threat, high-risk posts have adequate fire safety equipment and has procured additional personal protective equipment.
- Over the next year, the Department will have upgraded all high-threat, high-risk facilities with more modern surveillance cameras that allow for greater resolution and nighttime visibility.

The State Department also established a five-person Best Practices Panel of independent experts to recommend best practices for U.S. security platforms. The Panel made 40 recommendations based on their review. The State Department accepted 38 of these recommendations and is working to implement them.

###